

Via Dolorosa



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VIA DOLOROSA

Via Dolorosa

A SERIES OF MEDITATIONS ON
THE PASSION OF OUR BLESSED
LORD AND SAVIOUR

BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF
STEWART STONE
PRIEST

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY AND
FRATERNALLY DEDICATED

Introduction

DEAR FRIENDS: We have set aside other things that belong to our every-day living, to come to this House of God this afternoon, for a very definite purpose. As children of the Father, and brethren of the Divine Son, we have come for a few hours to meditate upon the occurrences of this sacred day, so many years ago, yet ever new and indispensable to Christian hearts. We have come

“To mourn with Him awhile”

who was today sorely afflicted, and crucified, to work the world's Redemption. We feel inclined to give Him our companionship until the end, as an act of sympathy for Him, and contrition in ourselves. These two feelings should ever go together, for, simply to realize how dreadful the first Good Friday was will be of little account except we connect ourselves with the responsibility for the Tragedy. As mourners and penitents, then, we approach the Cross. How we approach it does not signify,—that is, through what line of study,—so long as we get near enough to realize its import.

Various lines of meditation have been put out by devotional writers, on the actors in the

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Passion, and especially on the words of our Lord on the Cross. But I ask you to go with me today along the *Via Dolorosa*, the Way of Sorrows. There is such a street in modern Jerusalem, the traditional path of the Saviour from the supposed place of *Ecce Homo* to the city's gate. The traditional sites of this or that happening in the way to Calvary are marked by altars, or record tablets, and, were we really to be in the Holy City, the supposed way by which the Son of Man went up to His execution would seem like a thing of today, rather than of history. It is of no concern to us at this hour to realize that the exact spot of Calvary is a matter of dispute among scholars; Christ walked the distance from Pilate's presence to where the Cross was set up, and it was a way of sorrows. Let us tread it by following some of the events made known to us in Holy Scripture. Let us not fear to call up before our minds our sins, and connect them in their responsibility with the scene before us.

"From pain to pain, from woe to woe,
With loving heart and footsteps slow,
To Calvary with Christ we go.

See how His precious Blood at every station pours;

Was ever grief like His? was ever sin like ours?"

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I

The Lord Jesus condemned to Death

THE spectacular presentation of Christ to the people — the *Ecce Homo*—had failed. Up to this, the patient Sufferer already had endured much: always the knowledge of His impending fate; the mystery of bearing the iniquity of us all; that further mystery, unfathomable by human minds, of the agony in Gethsemane; a night not only of no rest, but of continual turmoil; the early arrest, and the long journeys to the abodes of Annas, then Caiaphas, then Pilate, then Herod, then Pilate again; the buffetings and mockery of the soldiers; the rough, insolent play of Herod's men-of-war; the smiting of the reed, the spitting, the plucking off of hair; the dastardly conduct of the false witnesses; the desertion of His friends; the unfaithfulness of the people that He loved; the ingratitude of His creatures; then the fearful scourging that tore the flesh, and rendered His sacred form a mass of bruises and wounds; the crown of thorns; and finally, the rejection by His nation; the choice

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of a robber and murderer; and His sentence of death.

“Follow to the judgment hall;
View the Lord of life arraigned;
O the wormwood and the gall!
O the pangs His soul sustained!
Shun not suffering, shame or loss;
Learn of Him to bear the Cross.”*

Let us learn, then, of Him what it was that brought on Him His condemnation. His death was voted as a prelude, of course, to that expiation of *all* sins, for the Redemption of the world, that whosoever “believe on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” But the sins that possessed the people, in whose hands were the scales of life and death for their victims, were untruth, with its kindreds, unfaithfulness and hypocritical judgment. “As for lies,” the Psalmist has said, “I hate and abhor them.” And how God must do the same. If He has been pleased to call Himself, not only the Way and the Life, but the *Truth*, how absolutely opposite to His nature is everything that makes for untruth. The Truth stood before the Sanhedrim, and untruth swayed that august council to give a judgment of death. Heaven and Hell were arrayed

*H. 93.

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against each other in that court of supposed justice, and, for man's salvation, Hell was allowed for the time to take its headstrong course. False witnesses made up any sort of a story against the Accused, but their lying was so outrageous, that even that prejudiced court could not allow the evidence. These perjurers had doubtless been of the audience to hear Christ's beautiful teachings, perhaps some had witnessed His miracles of healing; all knew that He was guiltless, and that if He was put away, it must be by fraud and lying. And so we put Him out of the way today,—Him, with His pleadings that we should lead a better life; His mute appeals that we should accept Him as our daily Friend and Companion. We heed the suggestions of the Father of lies who asks, "Yea, hath God said this?" Is not this rule too strict for thee?

Yes, our refuge in deceit from well-understood calls to duty; our untruthfulness to shield our pride; our unfaithfulness in critical moments to the dearest Friend that ever we can have; our ingratitude for many absolutions and benefits in answer to agonized appeals; our sins against light and our best judgment: all these were raising a clamorous cry, and were added to the unholy din about the sinless Sufferer, on that cloud-crowned Day of

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Atonement; the voice of our sins cried, "Let Him be crucified!"

And the voices of the people prevailed, but to prevail they had made a choice: "Not this Man, but Barabbas."—Pilate had offered them the choice, first, on account of yearly custom, and second, under the possible supposition that the choice would result in the freedom of an innocent prisoner, rather than of a murderer. Secluded in his palace, despising the people whom he governed, he doubtless little expected the popular judgment; standing on the outside as a neutral, he could scarcely understand the motive of the choice. It is a curious circumstance that Bar-abbas means "son of a father." Christ was essentially Barabbas, the Son of the Father. Origen calls attention to the tradition that the robber's name was Jesus, a very common name among the Jews at the time. And the old Armenian version of the Gospels gives Pilate's question as: "Which will ye that I release unto you? Jesus Barabbas or Jesus which is called Christ?" What a striking question this would be if the rendering were surely reliable: a matter of choice between Jesus Barabbas and Jesus Christ—which will you have? But whether the rendering be allowed or disallowed as an interpolation, the result will be just the same,

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whether there be any coincidence of meaning to the names, or not. Pilate put up the two characters, as though equal to human sight, but really with the hope that the populace would be convinced of the grotesqueness of the contrast, and clamor for the Saviour's release. But apparent equality has been offered to them; behind that apparent equality would their maliciousness hypocritically hide them, and preserve a show of fairness. Of two evils, give us the least; of two accused men, both condemned by the public sentiment, give us the man full of human life, rather than the ascetic; the man a sinner from the very energy of his nature, rather than the man who imposes the principles of self-denial and strict moral sentiments. Specious judgment! hypocritical choice! but yet so like the siftings of every day; the siftings when men choose Barabbas and crucify Jesus, and keep their self respect.

Christ did not set up that comparison of Barabbas with Himself; Pilate did it. Christ did not recognize the parallel for men to choose between; Pilate made it. Pilate stands for the irreligious, erring world's judgment; the earth's code without the semblance of authority from God's Word. Even though, through free will, a man may choose or reject the dis-

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cipleship of Christ, it is the world and not God that makes an equality of the things offered for choice; God did not establish the parallel of equity between the two. But Jesus Barabbas sounds like, and looks like, Jesus Christ. Both are offered without reserve. "There are just as good people out of the Church as in it"—we hear. The atheist with the big mellow heart is compared with the so-called Christian with a shriveled up heart. Men choose the swaggerer, with his coarse jokes and his doubtful past, because he is so full of blood and animal energy, rather than the Christ, whose discipleship must necessarily root out much of the life as now lived. And such men keep their self-respect, and we would-be Christians treat them with deference, and with sickly smile, and cowardly silence, give ear to their desecration of our precious Lord. We gaze today up there at that red-robed Figure in the balcony, whose marred and bloody Face looks down with pitying eyes upon the imprecating mob, who cry "Not this Man, but Barabbas." And many of our judgments are as unfaithful to His cause which we have espoused, and as hypocritical in our self-blinding to the discrepancy between the things put up for judgment. Christ says, "Pray," "fast," "give alms," "forgive your enemies,"

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"judge not," "be peace-makers." But we quote our Pilates, our governors; autocratic "common sense," whose word is law to us in our blind following; social custom; business principles; anything that makes for ease, comfort, quick wealth, the favor of your community, or a joyous time. Christ is wounded daily in the house of His friends; Thou, "O innocent Jesus, who with wonderful submission wast for our sakes condemned to die. Grant that we may bear in mind that our sins were the false witnesses; our blasphemies, back-bitings, and evil speakings were the cause of Thy accepting with gladness the sentence of the impious judge. O may this thought touch our hearts and make us hate those sins which caused Thy death."

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II

The Lord Jesus receives His Cross

HE popular clamor had received the strength of authority. The highest judicial power in that land had spoken, when, yielding to the demands of the populace, Pilate had delivered his sentence. To the last, he sought escape from the part he had to play in an unrighteous execution, even to the extent of washing his hands of responsibility. But the mob were willing to take the whole responsibility upon themselves, and to bind it as a burden about their necks, and the necks of generations yet to be born. "His Blood be on us, and on our children!" So be it, was the response of history.

For the final sentence Pilate had come out upon *Gabbatha*, the pavement, to give greater solemnity and importance to the action, even as capital sentences, in our modern courts, are delivered with due gravity and time-honored ceremony. The coming of life is a serious

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matter, and the legal taking of it away is even more serious.

The *Gabbatha* was an elevated platform, built against the wall of the great castle Antonia, and commanding a view of a large open court. The castle was the barracks of the Roman soldiers in attendance on the procurator, and the guardians of the peace of Jerusalem. Within the castle was the Pretorium, where Christ was the sport of the soldiers, and beyond was the more private palace of the governor.

The judgment delivered, Pilate and his officers leave the *Gabbatha*, and the Saviour is left to the soldiers to carry out the decree of death. The open court contains many soldiers, while the house-tops and the streets near by are doubtless full of the Jews watching eagerly each step in the execution of their demands. Once more the soldiers mocked Him, now fully in their power, and taking off the scarlet cloak, put His own raiment upon Him. All wait for Him, the central Object of the day's unholy work; two thieves are already bound by ropes to the transverse beams of their future gibbets, the soldiers have taken their formation for the march to Calvary. The executioners lift from the ground a heavy cross; the Victim stoops His shoulder under the

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weight, and staggers to an upright position—Jesus receives His Cross—Isaac has put to his shoulder the wood for the sacrifice.

Oh, by that example of patient endurance, God give us grace to do our duty! Take from us, dear Saviour, the cowardice that cringes and cowers, when we have to suffer.

“Lord Jesus, when we stand afar,
And gaze upon Thy Holy Cross,
In love of Thee, and scorn of self,
O may we count the world as loss.”*

As we see Him then, one against a million perhaps, arrested, condemned, surrounded by guards, no friends near, weak, crushed and helpless, let us take this thought: It was said of Him that day, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.” Was that true or no?

As simply a man He *was* absolutely helpless; no man was more encompassed by infirmities, not only in a bodily sense, but in His circumstances. All His good deeds towards the bodies and minds of the many with whom He had come in contact seemed swept into the background. There were some who sorrowed for His condemnation, His fall from popularity, but they were the gentle souls who recoiled from the barbarity of the day, and

* H. 95

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who, loving goodness for its goodness, were scarcely leaders in an excited mob. Nothing human was at hand to stem that tide of wrath and malignity; His case was hopeless—nothing remained but death. With this before His eyes—and such a death!—grasp fully the truth that He *knew* He had inherent power, but did not use it.

“He saved others!” yes, and what a record roll! Jairus’ daughter, the widow’s son, Lazarus, and many more perhaps; dead, as He would be before sundown, but death rolled back again; death transformed to sleep from which there was the glad awakening. The Lord of life and death helpless against dying! See Him, the Divine Saviour, grappling with fatal disease in leprous, palsied, and fevered cases, and turning it back, crushing it out, to give place to perfect health. Has the Victim forgotten the many cottage homes when the voice of lamentation gave place to the voice of rejoicing, through His power over the mother of death, disease and sin? Witness His power over the unseen world in making devils, His enemies, obey Him. Were these enemies more powerful who were now jeering Him and beating Him to take His place in the procession? Witness how the people at Nazareth and in Gethsemane recognized and feared

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some exhibition of inner magnificence flashing forth from His countenance perhaps: at His home, the angry people hurried Him to a precipice to cast Him headlong down: He did not run away from them—He passed through their midst, unharmed, and went His way. In the garden He asked the guards, "Whom seek ye?" "Jesus of Nazareth," was their reply. When He answered, "I am He," there was something so compelling, that the soldiers went backward and fell to the ground. Had He forgotten this? had He forgotten the Transfiguration, and His power to make wine of water, and much food of little, and to subdue the storm on Gennesareth? Never for one moment. When we realize that He knew His inherent power, that He knew He could summon by a word twelve legions of angels to His defence, it is then we begin to appreciate the nobility, yes, the godliness of the sacrifice. "Himself He cannot save" because He would not; for, for what cause came He into the world? To do His Father's will, and God willeth not that any should perish, but this would have been the case without the sacrifice for sin.

Standing there for the moment before Gabbatha, His shoulders weighted by the heavy beams, His weary eyes must have swept the

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view about Him, and there looming high in beauty was the Temple, the Temple in which He had taught God's Will, the Temple which He loved as His Father's House, the Temple in which He had stood as a little boy and exclaimed, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The Father's business, beginning then, was doubtless that of which He spake a few hours later when He said, "It is finished." The Father willed that all should have the opportunity of Salvation, in that He "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son," "who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate." O willing Victim, receive Thy Cross! O noble Workman of the Father's business, receive the tool for the great work for which Thou camest into the world! Every successful worker sees the end of his task from the beginning; he contemplates with satisfaction the prospect of completion from each stage in its progress. The Great Master Workman is so often mentioned in Holy Scripture as foreseeing and speaking of the end that lay clear to His omniscient eye: "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross despising the

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shame." This is no path of fatalism, for men to stumble along with their hearts eaten out by bitterness and despair for any improvement. It is much the sentiment of our Catechism: "to do my duty in that state of life, into which it has pleased God to call me."

"O blessed Jesus, grant us by virtue of Thy Cross and bitter Passion, cheerfully to submit to and willingly to embrace all the trials and difficulties of this our earthly pilgrimage, and may we be always ready to take up our cross daily and follow Thee."

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III

The Lord Jesus Falls under the Weight of the Cross

HE only incident, among those which we are considering today, that is not explicitly recounted in the Gospel narrative, is this present one, of Christ's falling beneath the weight of His burden. But I use it for three reasons: (1) The Lord's inability to bear up under the weight is implied by Simon being called upon to bear the Cross in His stead; (2) the Church has ever held to the tradition that the Lord fell, not once but three times, before being relieved; and (3) the traditional *Via Dolorosa* has the memorials of the three fallings, the result of course of the tradition that such is implied in Scripture.

What may we learn, dear Lord, from Thine extreme weakness?

First, that human nature, even in its perfection, has its limitations. Among all adults the soundest sleeper is the toiler with his

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hands. Happy is the man, worn and weary in his muscles, that has nothing on his mind but the expectation of doing tomorrow the same as he has done today. He has met the day's laborious work, and comes out at sunset, with genuine fatigue; sleep makes him, by tomorrow's sun, a new man again. The brain worker rests not so easily from his mental tax, and many a night witnesses the unceasing working of the mental machine, instead of repose. But body-worker and brain-worker do not always appreciate the condition nor the weariness of the heart-worker (to use the expression)—him, who uses body and brain under the inspiration and sweet compulsion of what we might call the religious sentiment, the love for souls—souls which are perishing and *must* be saved by God, but through human agency. This heart-work, elevated or depressed by success in winning, or failure in reaching, according to the intensity of the sentiment inspiring it, has its physical effects as well upon mind and body.

Akin to this, but infinitely higher, was the source of the failure of Christ's human strength. Fearful enough were the cruel beatings He had that day endured; wearying enough were His journeyings back and forth through the Holy City, after a night of no rest,

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and fasting as well; heavy enough for any man was the wood of a Cross sufficient to bear a man's weight; but I hold that we disparage Christ's manhood when we lay His weakness solely to these, fearful though they may be. Who but the Saviour can fully know the weight of ingratitude after benefits conferred; of sin after instruction imparted; of rejection after patience endured? And ask of the angels above, ask the devils of hell, ask the wisest and holiest of the sons of earth, to compute the value of Gethsemane's anguish, to estimate the weight of sin-bearing; and their very inability to give an answer shows how impotent we are fully to comprehend the weakness of the Cross-Bearer. The poor Body succumbed because of its own torture, and in reaction from the stress of mind and soul. He who has, and who had then, all power in Heaven and in earth, physically collapsed, and showed to the world His partnership with us in the physical limitations of human nature, unaided by the Divine. As the thought drives us to the realization that "we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves," He seems to say for our encouragement:

"Well I know thy trouble,
O My servant true;

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Thou art very weary,
I was weary too;
But that toil shall make thee
Some day all Mine own,
And the end of sorrow
Shall be near My Throne.”*

As we fall beneath the weight of some cross; as we sink under the oppression of some heavy temptation, God alone can help us, help us by His power, help us in His sympathy.

The Royal Master sets out upon His journey to *Golgotha*, clad in His own raiment, crowned with the diadem of cutting thorns, stooping beneath the heavy burden of the wood, His Throne. Harried, insulted, beaten along, hurried, His physical endurance suddenly gives out. He who aided so many out of the mire of sin lies prone on the soil of the city street. To many a man, robust of mind and strong in physique, the so-called weakness of Christ has been a great trial of faith. To some natures, rough and brusque, the very sight of gentleness is a sign of weakness, a lack of manly qualities, a surrender of noisy supremacy. The tragedy of Good Friday is compared with executions of criminals, and Christ is thought weak alongside of hardened

* H. 81

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wretches, as well as of saints and martyrs. But the time of the Saviour's greatest strength was at the supreme time of His martyrdom, the moment of extremest weakness to the outward appearance—it was the moment of victory!

This thought but gives strength to the conviction that the apostle had gained, "when I am weak then am I strong." The apparent paradox he had learned, in answer to prayer, when God told him for his encouragement, "my strength is made perfect in weakness." None of us has the courage, nor the strength, nor the grace, like St. Paul, virtually to welcome disaster, distress, persecution, in order to give wider scope for the exercise of God's grace. He learned his lesson through many happenings, and, although we are very far from standing with him, our lives afford enough experience for us to know that God's grace is most potent when we are weak. Not alone of physical weakness called sickness would I speak. Such a time, when we are laid by, away from the bustle of ordinary living, we are either fretful and complaining, or else, depending upon God in the simplicity of faith, we are strong by His grace, as seldom have we been before. "It is good for me that I have been in trouble," we gratefully explain. With-

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out having gone down into this dark valley, I should not have found His hand ready to help in my extremity. And when we have gone down like Christ close to the dust, and have reached the lowest depths, called humility, either by reason of a thorough confession of our sins; or by the rude and sudden throwing down of the pride that animated our life formerly, bending low beneath the weight, but raising our eyes for some one to have pity, some one to help, who is so strong, who is so abundantly satisfying to us in our extremity as He is, who was, as a man, incapable of bearing His Cross alone? The moment of our weakness witnesses to the existence of an interior strength, such as we had not known before.

And there is another weakness which we must some day all endure, even as we have sadly watched the same in others. "He is dying," the watchers say, and the priest and the doctor are hastily summoned. The breath is quick and fast, in little gasps; the eyes are glazing and the lids are scarcely open; the head is drooping, and the arms lie motionless. At the utterly helpless figure the loving eyes are gazing, over that human being lying "in great weakness of body," the commendatory prayer is said, but could priest and dear ones

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only see beyond material things, they would behold angels bending to receive with gladness the departing soul—the soul itself bright-faced and expectant, going forth in the strength of the grace of God to meet its Saviour.

“O Jesus, who for our sins didst bear the heavy burden of the Cross and didst fall under its weight, may the thought of Thy sufferings make us watchful against temptation, and do Thou stretch out Thy sacred Hand to help us lest we fall into any grievous sin.”

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IV

The Cross is Laid on Simon of Cyrene

 HE bodily endurance of the Lord Jesus is not sufficient that He should carry alone the Cross to Calvary; He has succumbed to its weight. Something must be done other than simply to whip an exhausted man to do a task for which he is incapable. The Prisoner and His Cross must be gotten somehow to the place of execution. The soldiers themselves and the Jews disdained to be made burden-bearers, nor would they allow themselves to be disgraced by carrying a criminal's gibbet. The bearing of a cross was in itself a humiliation which no one would voluntarily assume. A man from the country, from Cyrene in Africa, to whom the city and the scene before him were strange, was met by the procession at the time of this emergency. He was a stranger, and had no local rights nor claim to consideration. "Him they compelled" to help, and to take up the Cross, and carry it after Jesus.

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Meditate, dear friends, on these points: (a) As men would say, Simon happened to be there by chance (although there is no chance work in the affairs of God); he might have arrived in Jerusalem on Saturday, when all was over, instead of Friday. It might have "happened" far differently in many particulars. (b) He made no choice about the matter of cross-bearing; he had to do it, with his will or without his will. (c) Having done the task to the very end, the simple fact of its performance had given him the opportunity of being near to Christ, of knowing Him by sight and word through all the terrible scene. And we may depend upon the fact, although based solely upon inference, that he was converted and became Christ's disciple to the saving of his soul. The inference is this: he was a stranger in the city from a far distant town in Africa, yet the Christian writer of the Gospel gives his name and home, and adds the further explanation of his relationship, as father, to his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, as though the latter two men were better known than their father, and of consequence enough to be mentioned by name in the Gospel account. Furthermore the Gospel was written near that time (twenty-five years after the occurrence), when St. Paul sends special

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greeting in one of his letters, to Rufus, "chosen in the Lord, and his mother." Yes, there is no question to the simple mind, but that the result of that compulsory task was the winning to Christ and truth, of Simon, his wife, and his two sons, in fact, of the conversion of his household. A seeming chance—that moment in a lifetime,—and such a result.

The world thinks and talks much of luck, chance, fortune, and even a Christian treats many things of great spiritual moment as simple happenings. But true devotion translates "happenings" into "leadings," even as a good God brought Simon that day from the country to the city, on his casual errand of buying, selling, or visiting, perhaps for worship. I care to follow today only those leadings that result in spiritual opportunities. How full our experience is of them! What led you to Christ? There are doubtless some here, as in every congregation, whose conversion by the Holy Spirit was in some apparently chance way, as little expected at the time, as the greatest surprise in store for us tomorrow: a calamity, a joy, a sudden light from Heaven, a chance word. A man joins a choir for the simple love of music of any sort; his artistic service leads to devotional service, and the winning of a formerly careless heart.

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A child joins a Sunday-School for its "loaves and fishes," but ends in discipleship, and the conversion of his household. Persons come to service on invitation, or from curiosity, with a sneer on their lips, but stay on to pray with sincerity. Every mission and revival witnesses to incidental leadings, as well as many other occasions of human living. It may be that some one here today has not yet surrendered his heart to Jesus Christ; but led to this church this afternoon, I pray God that some word may fall that may make more vivid to him the love of God for him, and the longing of the Divine Heart that he should follow in the steps of a religious life, of service and sacrament.

But Simon was not only led to the spot to contemplate the patience of the Son of God, but upon him was laid a heavy cross, without his will, without his choice, perhaps much against his vehement protest; he did not recognize at the time what would be the blessed end of the task. He did not know at first who this exhausted Prisoner was, nor what are God's dealings under the Christian Dispensation, with those He loves. But we do. He could not see the end from the beginning; but we can. We are on our journey of life, engrossed with the plans of what we

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have to do, and how important the fulfillment of those plans are to us. Life, and vigor, and success, and great prospects are ours; to-morrow we must do this, and next week we must attend to that, and then—*Stop!* We are arrested on our journey; we cannot go any farther; hands hold us fast, and on our shoulders a heavy load is placed. Our tremendous energy is laid low by sickness; our muscular strength is mutilated by accident; our inheritance or our hard-earned savings are swept away by the defalcation of a trusted employee; the child for whom we have lived, and labored and economized disappears from our sight; our ambition which has been the inspiration of our life fades into the impossible; instead of competence or luxury there is sudden poverty; instead of popularity there is the coldness of former friends; instead of superabundant strength there is weakness, or a wasting disease, a living death; instead of a full home circle, boisterous with the joy of children and play and music, there is loneliness, and a silence full of the memories of the past, the specters of the loved and the lost.

“Has God forgotten to be gracious, and has He shut up His loving-kindness in dis-

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pleasure?" "My brothers, in every truly Christian life there must be a crucifixion. If you would partake of Christ's glory, you must share His suffering. You must go with Jesus on the way to Golgotha. You have all known sorrows, but perhaps you have not all learned to receive them as crosses sent by God."* "He does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men." It is not for the sake merely of making them sorrow and to be miserable, but, as a flower, so to crush as to bring out the fragrance of the life. Those who have no Christian faith to know God's love in affliction, may well "curse God and die;" even as Simon might have fulfilled his compulsory task, and then, cursing those who interfered with his plan, have gone off about his own devices. *How* we bear our cross is our opportunity; to watch which angels must bend with anxious interest. We know the end from the beginning, if we but allow ourselves to recognize the future blessing of patient and loving endurance for Christ's sake. We then are partners with Him, for the joy that is set before us. Even with tears streaming down our faces, and our mouths uttering involuntary moans of pain,

* Wilmot Buxton

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we *know*, and persist in affirming our faith, in spite of all, in spite of apparent contradiction, that "God is Love," that the Cross is love—His Cross and my cross.

"Inscribed upon the Cross we see
In shining letters, God is love;
He bears our sins upon the Tree;
He brings us mercy from above."*

"O Lord Jesus, I thank Thee, that Thou hast permitted me to suffer with Thee; may it be my privilege to bear my cross; may I glory in nothing else; by it may the world be crucified to me, and I unto the world; may I never shrink from suffering, but rather rejoice, if I be counted worthy to suffer for Thy Name's sake. Amen."

* H. 100

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V

The Lord Jesus Speaks to the Women of Jerusalem

AS with every procession, the crowds, with varying reasons, turn out to see it pass. Notably would this be the case where the sentiments of the people are wrought up over the object of the demonstration. The matters of Christ, His teaching, His fame, and His condemnation were not matters done in a corner. The whole city was in an uproar; to no one virtually was the occurrence unknown. There were great crowds thronging the narrow streets, pressing forward into every favorable view-point. The attitude of the crowd toward the Prisoner varied, as always. From the rude populace, who had been lusty in voice in calling on Pilate to crucify Him, were still hurled vile epithets and vulgar taunts; perhaps missiles were aimed at Him, and blows struck. To the chief priests and elders and scribes

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there was great satisfaction at the abundant success of their plans. Their self-congratulation burst out into taunts, which took the form of semi-quotations from the Master's teachings: "Son of God," "King of Israel," "Builder of the Temple in three days." "We are the faithful guardians of the nation's interests," they seemed to say: "now judge for yourselves which were right, this Impositor, or we, upright leaders of morals?"

What a tumult of invective, indecency and insult was beating upon Thy ears, patient Lord, to which Thou madest no reply! Herod could not get a word, nor Annas, nor Caia-phas; Pilate could scarcely get an answer; no word escaped in self-defence at His accusation, at the *Ecce Homo*, or at His condemnation; but in that awful crowd some bewailed Him and His fate, and He spoke to them. Ah then, "blesed are they that mourn," if it brings Christ to speak the words of comfort. Old tradition tells of Christ meeting His blessed mother on the Way of Sorrows and of bidding her farewell. Tradition also speaks of the compassions of Veronica, whose handkerchief was offered, that Christ might wipe the blood from His sacred face. But these very human and very likely incidents are not told us in the Gospel; but there is

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another tender touch, the weeping and bewailing of Him by the women of Jerusalem. On Palm Sunday the children cried, "Hosannah!" On Good Friday, the women publicly lamented; the men said "Crucify!" Men may love as deeply as women, but the latter are more openly expressive of their feelings, and less secretive. According to the Gospel, the whole long way from *Gabbatha* to *Golgotha* was unmarked by any expression of sympathy, except by these women. We know full well that there were many more that quietly bewailed. Think of His Mother, His ordained apostles, His chosen disciples, the objects of His miraculous healings, the recipients of His marvelous teaching. No open friends were apparent, until the Cross was set up, except these weeping women. Oh, may we have woman's tender heart, "to mourn with Him awhile" today. If the world establishes the standard that it is unmanly to weep, then let us be womanly, and let those tears flow unrestrainedly. But for what shall we weep? Let the incident teach us.

Let us not think that the Saviour was so far beyond and above ordinary human feelings as to be oblivious of the gratefulness of sympathy. Our own imperfections make it impossible for us always truly to estimate

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His motives and meanings. But surely it was the craving for sympathy and companionship that made Him mourn over the sleep of His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane; and surely again, it must have been balm on wounds to hear a sob of sympathy sounding from the crowd. "I looked for some to have pity on Me; but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort Me." These were words that had reference rather to the great desertion on the Cross. Here surely was some pity. But how did He meet it? Wilt Thou not take it, sacred Lord, as ointment very precious for Thy wounded Body? No. Here is a chance to do good; like the refreshment of the wine mingled with myrrh, He tastes it and puts it away, to serve the higher end. The potion was intended to deaden the pain, the sympathy was grateful to an aching Heart; but something could be done to help Heavenward these tender-hearted friends of His.

Whenever men were very strong in their professions of personal attachment to Him, He usually helped them by giving them a warning. St. Peter would die with Him; Christ prophesied his denial. The young man would follow Him whithersoever He went; Christ showed him that the foxes and the birds

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were better off than Himself. When the people were carried away with His teaching, Christ would utter some searching, soul-sifting parable. These were not rebukes to kindness. But Christ desires not disciples, who shall patronize Him, and His Cause, and His Church, nor those who simply admire His eloquent teaching, nor those who simply feel sorry for His sufferings. He wants disciples of those who need—must have Him, as their Saviour, because they are lost sinners without Him. He, as a Man, knows well the full value of human kindness and human sympathy, but the Christian religion is not a sentiment, nor is sympathy discipleship. It is our brazen serpent, it is our Christ lifted up upon the Cross, that is to be the attractive power of the world—the Lord Jesus as a Saviour of lost souls, who, repenting, cling to Him as their only hope. This is far different from the patronage accorded to Christ in His Church by men and women who pay magnanimously of their money, and their time on Sunday, as a noble act of generosity, but never consent to confess Him before men.

Oh, on this death-day of the Lord—

“Have we no tears to shed for Him,
While soldiers scoff and Jews deride?

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Ah! look how patiently He hangs;
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified!"*

Let your sympathy gush forth as from full fountains; give voice to your weeping and words to your lamentation. Let sentiment have its full sway, while we "gaze on Him"—"gaze on Him"—"*whom we pierced.*" There is the meaning of Christ's answer to the daughters of Jerusalem. I appreciate deeply your sympathy, but this is the time now to think of yourselves. As the tide of sentiment rolls high upon this tragic day, let the height of your sympathy be the measure of your contrition. We have no right to bewail Him without our *Miserere mei, Deus*, for it is simply detaching ourselves from the responsibility of causing His death. "I will speak of the loving kindness of the Lord," but I must speak as well of man's sin, which caused the Lord's death. I will speak of the gentleness and compassion of our Christ, but I must speak as well of the deceitfulness of our hearts, which would hide the real issue of this day—our sins—under the fair appearing covering of sorrow for the Sufferer. Why did He suffer and for what end? Because man crucified Him, and for man's sins He died. See the

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evil, and see the remedy for the evil, side by side; the brazen serpent on the pole, the fiery serpents on the ground working havoc.

We are not by nature cruel, long centuries of Christianity have refined our temperament, but none the less should we dissociate ourselves from responsibility in the cruelties of this day, we should by right of all propriety stand close, and watch with minute attention each separate act and its effect: each nail tearing through skin and flesh while we note the quivering nerves, and watch the wave of pain pass over the Blood-stained Face. You, refined people, would have me stop, and blot out from view the cruelties, as being the extravagances of a wild and by-gone time, and of unthinking, irresponsible soldiers, trained from boyhood to be bloodthirsty, vindictive and unfeeling. But, dear friends, I believe the horrors of Calvary are needed to incite contrition in many hearts who view their responsibility lightly. The crucifix is the Christian's best daily aid to devotion. We need it far more than pictured Saints. It will make us, far more, disciples of a Saviour than admirers of a Teacher. It will be our tutor, as this day is our instructor, in the sinfulness of sin, as well as in the love of a God who willeth not that any should perish.

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“Here I find my hope of heaven,
While upon the Lamb I gaze;
Loving much, and *much forgiven*,
Let my heart o’erflow with praise.”*

Dear Christian friends, the value of this sacred day will be lost to us if we identify not ourselves with the crucifiers of our Lord, and in humble penitence weep for ourselves, and those children of ours, our sins.

“O Lord Jesus, we mourn and will mourn both for Thee and for ourselves; for Thy sufferings, and for our sins which caused them. O, teach us so to mourn, that we may be comforted, and escape those dreadful judgments prepared for all those who reject or neglect Thee.”

* H. 104

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VI

The Lord Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

HE long walk from Pilate's presence to *Golgotha* is accomplished, and the Sufferer is helped up the incline to the crown of the skull-shaped hillock, where He is to be lifted up as an ensign for the people. It was near the public road, and many thousands, coming up to the Holy City, were attracted by the sight, and were led to watch. In the hill-top some had preceded the others, and three holes were dug in the ground for the feet of the crosses to be erected. The usual proceedings incident to an execution are going on, what we might expect on the part of friends, and the part of foes. Then we realize that there is a higher Authority than the centurion, in the direction of the various events. The Lord God, in inscrutable wisdom, has prescribed by prophecy one detail after another: that He should be lifted up,

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that he should be deserted and cry "My God! My God!" that he should thirst and be given vinegar to drink; that He should commend His soul into His Father's keeping; that they should refrain from breaking His legs; that He should be pierced with the spear; that He was to be numbered among the transgressors, and buried among the rich. And here, although there is no such mention of the thieves, we find Him stripped of His garments, "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." Jesus had no money, nothing of value except His plain and simple clothes of two garments. One, the large enveloping robe, was made of four pieces; it was divided into its parts, to each soldier a part. But the inner, tighter-fitting garment was one, without seam, and woven throughout. To cut it was to render it valueless, and the soldiers agreed that it must all go to one of them, and that to be determined by lot. So the chance of dice was thrown to determine whose it should be.

Think, dear friends, these were the garments whose very hem brought virtue to the sick who had faith to touch. We have the holy things of God in our very hands, as these soldiers had the sacred vestments, and we are not healed, because we touch not in faith. How many of our Sacraments are cold and life-

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less, vain, and void of virtue to us, because we lack the faith necessary to draw out the power and salvation of God. A vehicle of power the soldiers were handling and gambling over, but they knew it not.

Taking Christ's garments before He died was simply an indignity, another element in His sufferings, the element of shame. There was no need to hasten His denuding, but thus it must be; the cup must be filled to its very brim, that He may drink to its lowest dregs. Exposed to the indignity of immodesty, and the shamelessness of the people, consider what was being enacted by type and figure. Our first parents in their primal innocence were unclothed, but were afforded garments after the Fall. Christ came, the second Adam, sinless and perfect, to redeem the Fall. As St. Augustine has said of this, "He (that is Christ) laid aside His garments; for it was meet, that in leading men into Paradise, He should unclothe Himself of those garments which Adam received when He was cast out of Paradise. For when Adam sinned, and was thereafter to die, he received coats of skins, which were made of dead animals, and were symbols of the dying which had come upon him on account of sin. But the Lord, in taking upon Himself all things for our

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sakes, clothed Himself with these, in order that He might also strip Himself of the same, and instead of these might clothe us with life and immortality." Instead of feeling an indelicacy of our Lord being stripped of His garments, let us see in it, the rather, the testimony of His spotless Perfection, the witness of His character as second Adam, the Restorer of our race.

In the ignominy of Christ bereft of His garments, which were divided among the soldiers, let us see another figure. His human nature might be divided according to the malice of men, but His Divine nature could not be injured; it was one and indivisible. But rather let us take the usual figure, the common explanation: His clothes, His Church. That which is divisible is the Gospel, sent to the four quarters of the globe, the four winds of Heaven, but the seamless robe is the Church's unity. The Church may be of four great branches, national, autonomous, and with intercommunion, but the underlying unity no man may break; it is woven by the Lord as one. Herein is the meaning of the word of the Creed, "the *one* holy catholic and apostolic Church," which leaves no room nor possibility for broken unity. "O pray for the peace of Jerusalem," pray for the unity of

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Christianity, for there is no prayer that lies closer to the heart of Jesus Christ, who, on the night of His very betrayal, prayed that His disciples might be one. Man may be able to disturb the intercommunion among historic Catholic Churches; he may cause lack of love, yea, even hate and recrimination, but never may man apparently rend the unity of the seamless robe. Calvary brings us the message then of missions, and concord among Christians: missions in the separation of Christ's outer robe for diffusion to the far corners of the earth; and concord in the family of Christ, in the beauty of the symbolism of His undivided robe. This He wore closest to Him; may we not believe that such desire lies close to His heart?

Such was the shame inflicted upon Christ, meekly and patiently borne. About very trivial things we say we are ashamed to do this or that. Why? because our pride says it will suffer by having persons think less of us, our appearance, our ability, our character. We are ashamed because we are proud. Christ *may* not have suffered shame in His own heart, because He was pure, absolutely sinless, and perfectly humble. In the dazzling

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whiteness of that character, and that complete humility, we may find a refuge when pride assails, and impurity is aggressive.

“Lord, forever at Thy side
Let my place and portion be;
Strip me of the robe of pride,
Clothe me with humility.”*

“O Lord Jesus! Thou didst suffer shame for our most shameful deeds. Take from us, we beseech Thee, all false shame, conceit and pride, and make us so to humble ourselves in this life, that we may escape everlasting shame in the life to come.”

* H. 649

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VII

The Lord Jesus is nailed to the Cross

HE time for which the world had waited, through all its ages, has come; the fulfilment of the many Jewish sacrifices is about to take place; the Pascal Lamb is about to be slain, to give security from the angel of death to those who use the Blood; the knife is raised aloft over Isaac as he lies upon the wood; but no voice from Heaven this time arrests the threatened death. No voice sounds from on high to interpose; no laughter is heard from hell; no angels sing a chorus for the departing life, as they had for the coming life. Even the crowd, kept at a distance by the guards, has subsided from its noise into a murmur of curiosity and watching. The orders of the centurion are heard, as the Saviour is laid upon His back, that torn and bleeding back, upon the wood of the Cross. Alone in the midst of those who desire to be His enemies, He feels not loneliness, for One is near, the

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Great One, His Father. To Him He speaks as though face to face, and eye to eye. He offers at the same moment His Hands and His Feet, to His Father as a willing sacrifice, to the soldiers for them to do their will. No piercing cry of anguish, no imprecation is heard, when with speed and strength the four soldiers do their accustomed parts, and the Body of the Son of God is fastened by four points of agony to the Cross.

“Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.”

“O Jesu, we adore Thee, upon the Cross our King;

We bow our hearts before Thee, Thy gracious Name we sing.

That Name hath brought salvation, that Name in life our stay,

Our peace, our consolation when life shall fade away.”*

But as our King went up to His Throne of the Cross, there was some other sound than the blows of the hammers, and the subdued murmurs of the crowd. Some voice broke on the ear, a voice that gave us the most precious word of all the day: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” The keenest anguish, and the sharpest pain in thirty-

* H. 364

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three years, brought that utterance, the utterance of a Personality that has been unchanging from eternity. It is then a reflection of God's disposition toward us of a willingness to forgive even before forgiveness is sought by the sinner. The people were still murmuring when water was given them from the rock. The nation was still in rebellion for food when God shed the Manna upon them. The soldiers were in the act of killing Jesus, when His pardon for the sin was being proffered. Oh, the heights of sublime love, which we can scarcely begin to comprehend, with our haughty pride, and touchy dispositions, and vindictive temperaments. After we have had our chance to blow out the violence of our indignation, and to nurse for a while our wounded self-esteem, then perhaps we may coax ourselves to condescend to give a semblance of forgiveness for decency's sake, and because of the claims of religion. But to have the forgiveness ready and waiting even before the infamous indignity is ended, this we say is God-like! No, dear friends, it was the human Jesus who prayed, the poor, human, pain-racked nature of Him who is our Teacher to-day, at His Cross-side.

With its first intent, the prayer must have been the mantle thrown over the soldiers.

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"Father, forgive them," for they do not fully appreciate the pain they are causing, having never felt; they are rough, coarse, and hardened, with no refined feelings; they do not know who I am; they are simply doing their duty as they know it, and as they see it. Do we so make allowances for lack of knowledge? or are we constantly excusing our own vehemence by saying, "He ought to have known better"? Awful as seems the crime of the soldiers who drove the nails, and suspended my Lord in air, by the agony of four painful wounds, what were they doing but their common duty, according to the directions of the authority above them? Poor ignorant fellows, I am thankful to think of one of them, at least, who was converted by that day's spectacle of patience and loving kindness. Often would our judgments be softened by reversing in our minds Christ's prayer: "They know not what they do, so Father forgive them" in their ignorance.

But I think that the mantle of Christ's charity in that dark and fearful day, extended further. The Jews, His brethren by nationality and religion, had demanded His death, and the supreme Roman power had been obliged to acquiesce in the decision to avoid friction, an uproar of the people. For

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them would He crave pardon because they did not appreciate what they were doing. They were indeed incurring the prophesied calamity of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the horrors attendant upon the dispersion; they were setting in motion the vast force, irresistible when started, of temporal retribution; they were pulling down the tower upon their own heads; but in the midst of wrath, think on mercy! O God, in the destruction of the body, save the soul! However wide the scope Christ meant by His prayer, throughout that scope He evidently recognized an excuse through ignorance, a palliation through lack of knowledge.

But have we Christians any reason to hold that Christ's prayer covers us? Don't we know full well what we are doing, when we sin, without recourse to the subterfuge of pleading ignorance? It is necessary, of course, for the true disciple to pray, in addition to his confession, "cleanse me from my secret faults, and keep Thy servant also from presumptuous sins." It may be the little child, it may be the catechumen, could offer ignorance as palliation; but for us grown-up men and women, trained in the Church; nourished by Sacraments; with open Bible and Prayer-Book; with the guidance of spirit-

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ual directors; with manuals of devotion and forms of self-examination—for us to seek refuge from responsibility by pleading ignorance, it is but self-deceit. We *do* know, when we are proud and hateful; when we are critical and patronizing; when we are self-indulgent and sensuous; when we are deceitful and equivocating; when we are neglectful and self-excusing; and the whole category of things that we find amiss through our self-examination. We are children of the light and know; and being such, towards ourselves we should be strict, and towards others lenient. Because we know, the inference should not be that all others know equally well, but rather that there is room for excuse from not knowing duty fully well. Strict judgment of ourselves, lenient judgment of others.

Although, in one sense, there is no room to claim forgiveness because of ignorance, yet in another sense we don't know what we do, what we have done. The world is not wise enough to estimate fully the meaning of Calvary's Sacrifice—the meaning of sin—our sin—"in God's most holy sight"; that this was necessary for its expiation. Against sin—our sin—as a value, is to be set the Incarnation, the unexampled Life, the Circumcision, Bap-

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tism, Fasting, Bloody Sweat, Rejection, Scourging, Crucifixion, and Death. Do we see this train of consequences when we offend? Man's sin made Calvary necessary, God's love made it possible. So God meets us there at the Cross, and says, "This I have done for thee; what hast thou done for Me?" And what is our answer today? Sin after sin; stab after stab at the loving Heart of Christ; long alienation from Him, while pride and youthful sin ruled in our heart; weariness to meet Him in prayer and sacrament; unwillingness to exert our utmost power to aid His cause, to teach His children, to win His wanderers, to extend His kingdom. Good Friday teaches us the measure of ingratitude.

"O, Jesus, crucified for me, subdue my heart with Thy holy fear and love; and since my sins were the cruel nails that pierced Thee, grant that in sorrow for my past life I may pierce and nail to the Cross all that offends Thee."

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VIII

The Lord Jesus Dies Upon the Cross

E are approaching the end. For six hours the Lord of glory has been hanging upon the Cross, His human life fast ebbing away, and now about to vanish. He has had the agony of the wounds unalleviated by drug, or ointment, or change of position. Drop by drop, the Precious Blood of the Paschal Lamb has been shed. Added to bodily torture there has been heart torment: the indifference of the soldiers as they gambled over His clothing; the imprecations of the impenitent thief so unlike his comrade in misery; the taunts of the chief priests and scribes, and the jeering of the people; the giving up of, and farewell to, His Blessed Mother. Mindful of others rather than Himself and His woes, always considerate, He had prayed for leniency for His crucifiers; He had accepted and pardoned the thief, promising Him Paradise; He had provided a care-taker for His

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dear Mother, and a mother for His beloved disciple. What more now except the end? While the sun was at its zenith, there crept over it the supernatural darkness, like the veil before the Holiest of all, behind which the High Priest went alone on the Day of Atonement. Alone in the darkness, Jesus was working the great atonement through which every penitent soul finds restored access to the Father. His friends had departed; the people drew away in horror, or returned to the city beating their breasts; a hush, a silence, like the pall of gloom, fell over the earth as Nature stood aghast. Darkness has ever had its weird and fearsome effect upon the minds of men, but no darkness was like this, at mid-day. In its midst hung Jesus Christ alone, alone in every sense, alone in a way that we cannot comprehend. He is within the veil; it is God's will that He should be alone; it is not for us then to pry into that sanctuary, to intrude upon that privacy, to inquire into its meaning. With hand on mouth, we strain forward to listen. All still, then—"Eloi! Eloi! lama Sabachthani!" The loud voice from the silence sends the blood chilling through the veins. What! forsaken of His Father? Surely His words said so. A mystery of the darkness, a mystery of the work of Redemption. The soldiers

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arouse to the realization that they are in charge, and running to Him, offer Him vinegar. He refuses to taste it, but shortly after, when it is offered again at His cry "I thirst," He takes a little, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. "They gave me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty they gave Me vinegar to drink."

"O Sacred Head surrounded
By crown of piercing thorn!
O bleeding Head so wounded,
Reviled and put to scorn!
Death's pallid hue comes o'er Thee,
The glow of life decays,
Yet angel-hosts adore Thee,
And tremble as they gaze.

I see Thy strength and vigor,
All fading in the strife,
And death with cruel vigour,
Bereaving Thee of life;
O agony and dying!
O love to sinners free!
Jesu, all grace supplying,
O turn Thy face on me."*

"When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished." Finished the work He came to do; finished His father's

* H. 102

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business; finished expiation; finished the Jewish law and Messianic prophecy. Nothing more now, but to depart in peace, and leave behind pain and anguish. Nothing more than to suffer death, the human limitation that He allowed Himself to possess, to be perfect Man dwelling among dying men, with whom He willed to be one. As those who were near watched, the death pallor came, the Body heaved in its last clutch at life, with a loud voice He cried, "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit."

At once the scene changes; the placid calm, the hush and darkness are gone. The dark cloud of supernatural terror is rolling back, revealing the daylight again; the earth is in a tremor, heaving and moving, and grinding the rocks together; the people are in terror falling to the quivering earth, or running here and there; the crosses sway with their human weights; many graves are rent open; and in the city consternation is caused not only by quivering walls and yawning seams in the roadways, but the veil of the Temple, the shield to the Holy of Holies, is rent from the top to the bottom by some invisible hand from above. With Longinus we exclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God!" whose death so peaceful and kindly in itself, is followed by

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such portents, great and terrible. We may indeed

“Learn of Jesus Christ to die,”—

to die peacefully, with kindly love to all around, in humble trust in the Father’s care; but to that Death none of ours may be likened, for its significance and influence upon the world, past, present and to come; a Death of wonder, of power, and of mighty love.

“O by Thy Cross and Passion,
Thy tears and agony,
And crown of cruel fashion,
And death on Calvary;
By all that untold suffering
Endured by Thee alone;
O Priest! O spotless Offering!
Plead, for Thou didst atone!”*

That Death of glory is our only hope.

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

In the cleavage is the hiding; in the smiting is the safety; in the dying is the security of life forevermore. In two days our thoughts will be centered on “Risen with Christ.” To-day we must be dead with Christ. We think that we would have done much better than

* H. 360

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some of the New Testament characters; perhaps today we should make our boast with St. Peter, that we are willing to die for Christ, and die with Christ. Today may witness then a genuine test; you may, you should die with Him; take with you your old life and let it die, nailed to His Cross. If the virtue of this holy day is to be yours, thus it must be. There is no value to forgiveness for him who is not sorry for his sins; there is no value to Christ's dying for him who has no intention of casting off evil. This is the comradeship of the Saviour, and this the condition of His covenant. As St. Paul says: "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v: 14, 15.) We were indeed "baptized into His death," but many times since that first innocence, have we lapsed into sin, and brought again the necessity of dying again from an evil life. It is the great call of Good Friday, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" for thine own sake? Oughtest not thou to go forth from this House of Death as in the ceremonies of the grave, a token to thyself at least of a death unto sin?

"O Jesus, we devoutly embrace that hon-

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ored Cross, where Thou didst love us even unto death. In Thy Death is all our hope. Henceforth let us live only unto Thee, so that whether we live or die we may be Thine."

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IX

The Lord Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

 HE three bodies upon the crosses might have remained indefinitely, or rather until human life was extinct in the most tenacious. But once more the Jews had their way. Their great feast was near at hand; they wanted not the deadly sight before their very eyes, nor the evidence of their self-confessed perfidy against an innocent Prophet. They went to Pilate and begged that the bodies might be removed. The orders were given, and the soldiers went to examine the state of the crucified. The two thieves were found alive. Their legs were crushed with heavy implements to hasten their deaths by this added torture. How we shrink at the sight of their approach to Christ's Cross for the same purpose. He surely has every appearance of real death, and not coma; His sacred Head rests heavily against His Breast. The soldiers will make sure at least, though there seems to be no

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need of breaking the legs. A sharp spear is thrust through the side and pierces the Heart, the poor broken Heart. There follows the weapon as it is withdrawn, a stream of water and blood, not commingled, otherwise the water would not have been detected, but apparently separated and distinguishable, the one from the other. St. John witnessed the flow, and takes particular pains to record it, and guard the truth of the record, "that ye may believe."

"Let the water and the blood,
From Thy Side, a healing flood,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure."*

It was the healing flood of Baptism, and Holy Communion, the double cure of sin, and which, necessary to salvation, "save from wrath and make us pure" from transgression. Christ, even by His dead Body, was teaching the world His plan of salvation.

And now the ladder and the pincers are brought into requisition; hurry along the work, for it is nearing the time of the evening sacrifice; the holy day begins at sundown, and all must be finished by that hour. Christ's friends have come again now, for His burial;

* H. 336

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His Body is lifted tenderly to the ground; that Body of the Nazarene? There is no money in staring eye and drooping chin; who wants the Body of the Nazarene? There is no money to It for the soldiers, as there was profit in the garments; Pilate wants It not; the Jews have no use for It. The Nazarene could have said with the Apostles, "Silver and gold have I none!" His cold, dead, dishonored Body is the legacy He has to leave His friends. Do they care for it? Ah! well may we believe that the Blessed Virgin has returned with St. John, unable to stay away; and that even now she has in her lap the Sacred Head of her Son—her Boy, her Baby, with closed eyes as though He were asleep, as on some other occasions of the happy years gone by. Her kisses on His forehead cannot wake Him now, as then they could; no responsive look of love meets her maternal gaze. His Face has been washed of its blood-stains, and, the crown of thorns removed, His long hair is ordered as it used to be in life. At His sacred, pierced Feet, those Feet that went about untiringly doing good, was she, doubtless, that had such need of a Saviour, the Magdalene. Once more, she may wash them with her tears of sorrow, and dry them with her beautiful hair. Yes,

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pure, holy, human love and forgiven penitence both cling to Christ.

Are there others to whom Christ is precious? There is St. John, mutely grieving, devout, loving young manhood; there is Joseph of Arimathea, the strong, unwavering convert of middle life. Those who were about the cold still Form were those who, having loved Him in life, now clung to Him in death, as men will cling to a cause, lost, irreparably lost, indeed, but enshrining in its dead features the hopes, ideals and aspirations of the past, so sadly gone.

Christ's crucifixion left behind it a Body to be disposed of, a dead Body indwelt by Divinity. When Christ went away again, at His Ascension, he left, as it were, again His Body as the object of our care and use: His Sacramental Body, whensoever we break the Bread—not now the Body of a dead Christ, but a partaking of a living Lord. We are by it to “show forth the Lord's Death till He come.” As on that Good Friday afternoon, this Body of Christ is at the disposal of all. As then, the commercial spirit wants It not; there is no money in It. The enemies of Christ want It not; It is too suggestive of their notable and crying sins of rejection. Only those who dare to come out openly before the world, and

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make the claim of friendship, are entitled to the precious charge and possession.

And of us personally, we are looking forward to our Easter Communion, to which greater crowds come than at other days of the year, a testimony to some innate feeling of propriety and duty—our Communion with our Paschal Lamb, our crucified but risen Saviour. What is our attitude towards that Sacramental Body? Surely one of friendship, else we would not come; but is it of the enduring kind of friendship, that will not forsake, a friendship in season and out of season, throughout the cycle of the years? Are we preparing for the reception of the Body of Christ at Easter by carving out a resting-place in the stony rock of our hearts? are we planning to anoint the Body with the sweet fragrance of our worship, praise and devotion? have we made ready by confession of sins the white linen of the righteousness of the saints? We must rest through the Holy Saturday, but very early in the morning of the first day of the week we may come on feet of love to see to the putting of the dear Saviour in the prepared resting-place. What is our disposition of heart toward the Body of the Lord? especially if we have loved much and had much to be forgiven? Our ambition and our fervent

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desire will be to make as meet, and as fit as possible, His intended abiding place. Lord—

“Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown,
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.”*

“O Lord Jesu, grant that we may never refuse to bear that Cross which Thou hast laid upon us; who willed not to be taken down from the Cross until Thou hadst accomplished the work which Thou camest to do.”

* H. 432

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X

The Lord Jesus is Laid in the Sepulchre

“Resting from His work today,
In the tomb the Saviour lay;
Still He slept, from head to feet
Shrouded in the winding sheet,
Lying in the rock alone,
Hidden by the sealéd stone.”*

RADUALLY the truth had dawned upon a rich man of Arimathea, Joseph by name, and a member of the Sanhedrin. At first, he became a secret admirer and disciple, but the crisis developed him. Every crisis is a sifting of human nature; it makes heroes, and it makes cowards; it shows a man in his true light. The crisis on Calvary drove the Apostles far away; it ripened Joseph's faith and inspired his courage. Known to be a member of the council, he went boldly to Pilate and begged that the dead body of Christ should be given to him. Armed with

*H. 107

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the consent of the authorities, he went to Calvary and claimed his own. With St. John and the holy women, perhaps with others, he prepared the Body for burial, doubtless providing by his wealth the rich spices and ointments. With slow and steady feet they move towards the garden, where there is a new tomb hewn out of the solid rock. Among them they bear the lifeless Burden. What strange reversal! All their lives long God had borne them and sustained them; but now they were bearing the helpless Body of God the Son. Arrived at the tomb, the Body is tenderly laid in it, wrapped about with winding sheet. The revolving stone door is moved to place, closing the entrance. The suspicions of the Jews that His disciples would steal the Body, and say It had risen from the dead, led them to ask Pilate to take precautions, so the stone is sealed and a guard of soldiers placed outside the door.

And so Jesus was buried; and in His grave were buried the hopes and expectations of His followers. He had spoken distinctly to them of rising the third day, but no one came to His grave to greet His rising. Rather the women came mournfully to complete their temporary labors of Friday afternoon, when they had to hurry before the coming of the

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Sabbath; the disciples were mourning in the city till notified by Mary Magdalene. And so we, unless we are fortified by actual experience, doubt the explicit word of God if the thing seems incredible. Our difficulties, our troubles, our sorrows are not on a par with other people's, we say; they are extraordinary, and beyond the possibility of thinking God good or merciful. "Hope thou in the Lord." No, hope is dead, and buried in the grave with my ideals, my comfort, my youth, my gaiety of life. And, alas, the stone is sealed by our grim determination to have it so. Buried also must be our old manner of life and conversation, whereinsoever they were wrong.

These days of commemoration in the Christian year are far more than mere historical recollections, far more than mere forced sentimentality. To make them such, of course, is one way to do; Good Friday amounts to no more to the majority of people, perhaps. But its essential purpose, intended by Holy Church, is equally honor to the Lord, and revival to ourselves. Nothing short of dying with Christ to the old life will satisfy our best thought. We have been weeping for ourselves as well as for Him, sympathy and contrition have been the double fount of tears. As we have mourned for Him in His desperate con-

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dition, so have we mourned for ourselves for our ungrateful lives. As we have in imagination laid Him tenderly in the tomb, so in reality must we lay the old bad life down, and see it hid from sight behind the rocky door. God's holy One cannot see corruption, but how corrupt and offensive our life in its retrospect! St. Paul makes somewhat the same figure: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—this dead body hanging offensively as about his neck. Take it away, out of sight!—bury it!

And buried in the grave of today is the Lenten season of this year. Beautifully it came forth, a bright, hopeful thing with the star of the morning upon its brow. Gladly you tarried with it at the first; it was sweet company until you tired of its daily companionship. Deserted and unnourished it has pined away and is gone. Our great revival season, the blessed opportunity for discipline and frequent approach to God through multiplied services and the incitement of example, has nearly waned. With its partial successes and partial failures; its many good resolutions, and its many broken promises; with its half-hearted accomplishment of what we set out to do; its frequent forgetfulnesses and petty triumphs; good or bad, it must be offered as

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our sacrifice, and then laid away, though not forgotten. And this service, in which we have been engaged, will shortly be ended, and laid away as in a tomb. I pray God, it may rise again perhaps in helpful thoughts and chastened will. We offer to God this journeying in company with the Son of God, along the way of sorrows. It has not been designed simply to harrow the feelings to no end. The end has been to promote a fellowship in His sufferings, as an incitement to deeper love and more sincere contrition.

“From pain to pain, from woe to woe,
With loving heart and footsteps slow,
To Calvary with Christ—”

has been our aim, to strive to know a little of the great mystery of God's redeeming love for man. We know better now, I trust, why it is called “the Way of Sorrows.”

“Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.” Through it all I think we have noticed a light to His sad, marred countenance; it was to Him no meaningless tragedy. “For the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame;” the joy of Redemption; the joy of salvation's increasing ranks; the joy of finishing the Father's work; the joy of all accomplished

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labor; the joy of the session at the Right Hand of God. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." With this joy set before Him, this knowledge of the end, this conviction of triumph, we may be sure, that suffering sincerely with Him, and for His sake, will lead to our triumph as well.

"O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction." The death-bed of Christ upon the Cross speaks comfort to every sorrowing household, and brightens every departing soul with the surety of immortality.

"When my last hour cometh,
Fraught with strife and pain,
When my dust returneth
To the dust again;
On Thy truth relying,
Through that mortal strife,
Jesu, take me, dying,
To eternal life."*

"O Jesu, most compassionate Lord, we adore Thee dead and enclosed in the Holy Sepulchre. We desire to enclose Thee in our hearts, that, united to Thee, we may rise to newness of life, and, by the gift of final perseverance die in thy grace. Amen. Amen."

* H. 340

Four Pictures of Love

I

"God So Loved the World!"

— S. John 3 : 16

HE silver moonbeams shone through the uncurtained window of the cattle-shed; and the rude horn lantern, swinging from the heavy roof-beam, cast its feeble, yellow illumination; and the two lights gave to each object a double shadow; but the deepest shadow of all, deeper even than that which lay unmoved within the oxen's stall, was the shadow of discourtesy which closed the door of the neighboring hostelry against a weary traveler and a woman in distress. Call not such lack of sympathy in the human race brutish, when the brutes of God's creation, stirred within their stalls, withheld their feeding and lowed their welcome to their visitors. Above them leaned the ladder, reaching up to the storehouse of their richest gift, their provender. But not to toss down new hay into their mangers had these nightly visitants come; another ladder was being set up, reaching to God's storehouse, from the shadows of earth below; and

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angels, as in Israel's dream, were to ascend and descend upon it, bringing the Good of Life from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. And could it be that this was even now a fact, an accomplished boon for mankind? No night-bird could have given that sound that broke the stillness of the earliest morning; no such harmony could have been piped from the simple reed of some watchful herdsman whiling away the long night-hours. Had not the little Infant, nestled close to His Mother's throbbing heart, been sleeping, the music, rolling up the hillside, now gloriously loud, now softly sweet, would have reminded Him of Home,—another Home, not this,—where such music is continual, where there is brighter light than moon and candle, where all is love, and not closed doors and closer fastened hearts. But He slept on, and the watchers heard and wondered. And as they harkened to the music, to one of the watchers truth came, like the kindling in the dark heavens of the bright stars above them. She encircled the sleeping form, with trembling arms that scarcely dared to touch; she drew up the rude covering to protect from the night wind that eddied through the room. What though she had been rebuffed from more comfortable lodgings? What though

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poverty and labor were to be her life-long lot? The silver and golden light of moon and lantern were still making cross shadows upon the straw-strewn floor; but she was looking with a mother's love at Him, Whose is the silver and the gold; and Whose the Cross as well; Mary was gazing upon her God.

"God so loved the world!"

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II

“God so loved the world.”

THE day was dawning, but who was there to hail its coming? The glow that had rested above the blue mountains of Moab was soon burned away by the rising of the sun, blazing in its pitiless strength, but its light fell on no human habitations in the whole of the desolate scene. A sheet of water stretched away toward the rising, and reflected what glory the day brought with it, like the face of the deceitful, fair with borrowed beauty, but beneath the surface, death. The betrayal of this hypocrite, this Dead Sea, was its margin, where lay great boulders white with the evaporated brine; where death-dealing waves had reached up to strangle some chance vegetation. Back from the sea rose the great gray rocks, tier upon tier, majestic in their bulk and awful in their barrenness. Only here and there grew some hardy, lonely shrubs, and these the exiles, the outcasts from more fertile fields—

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exiles and outcasts like the wild beasts who prowled among them, driven back from inhabited regions, to find a home. Even now a tawny lion, stealthily emerging from the gloom of his den, is bristling, and crouching upon the edge of a table rock, for a spring upon the only human being to be seen in all that region, a Man sitting below the rock, apparently unconscious of danger. The moments pass, but the animal does not spring upon his prey. A spell falls on him; he cringes now, and slinks off to his den. The sunlight which makes the beast's eyes like two glowing balls of fire peeping from the darkness falls also on the face of the Man, and shows between the framing of His long hair a visage marred by want; the hollow eyes and sunken cheeks and parted, parched lips. He has awakened to another day, the fortieth like this, like this in the intensity of its sunlight, like this in its loneliness, like this in its needs; yes, awakened from His pillow of stones, His mattress of earth, His canopy of the heavens. His hair is wet with dew, His garments soiled by wear. With difficulty He raises His enfeebled frame erect, and looks toward the rising sun, and smiles toward the blue heaven as though into some unseen Face. Is there a use for another day

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for the Outcast? Yes, other men are outcasts and discredited, other men have no homes, and hunger for the simplest food; other men labor and suffer the hard things of life; other men have fierce warfare with ghostly foes without and with fleshly lusts within;—and Jesus Christ was unwilling to leave untasted any cup of suffering which His brothers had to drink.

“God *so* loved the world!”

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III

“God So Loved the World!”

SUPPER is ended; it has not been a festive feast for jollification; no laughing and singing have been heard, though wine-cups stand about the disordered table, with the broken fragments of food. It has been a religious act, but deeper than religious feelings are personal feelings, and they have risen to the surface, and have sobered every face among the serious-looking men about the table. Deep thoughts are moving tonight, anxious thoughts that make men indisposed to talk. It is sight, not converse, they want, for every eye is directed to one spot, upon the tall, slim figure of a Man, naked save for a girding cloth. It must be a servant, for thus are men-servants about their household duties. There is the awakening consciousness of new ideas to the men who gaze wonderingly at this servant Man, who moves about the room

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in His menial duty, taking from one to the next the basin of water, washing the dusty feet of each, and wiping them with the towel wherewith He is girded. Each one receives the ministration, though some after protest. They are not all clean, neither feet, nor heart, nor head. An interior view would exhibit the panorama of the every-day, commonplace group of men. Here perhaps the ardent, loving submissive heart bursting with the affection that mourns because this humbling of a dear friend is needful. Here perhaps the cold indifference with the shade of contempt which might say, "I would not do that!" Here perhaps the self-sufficient, talkative, and protesting against any such indignity being put upon a companion for his sake. Here perhaps the ready willingness to submit without a word or stir, lest observation should be keen to penetrate the pious mask which hides treachery, lust and murder. A motley group of seemingly well-meaning men! but the naked serving Man knows them all like an open book:—love, inconsistency, self-confidence, malice,—and yet He performs His menial task to the very end. What He did they knew not then, but they did know after. A new commandment had been spoken from that

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Sinai of the upper room—that we should love one another, and the Servant who was Master set the example to His sin-stained disciples.

“God so *loved* the world!”

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IV

"God So Loved the World!"

IN spirit an angel carries us to a position close behind the Cross; our head is near the Sacred Head now wounded, the fair curling hair is almost on our cheek as we, with Him, look down upon a sea of faces, look down, yes, through time as well as space, upon the world, looking cross-wards. The bottom of the sea of which the faces are the tossing waves, slopes down from us and away, and across, to the chosen city with its mighty gates, and noble walls encircling the beautiful Temple of God. If there seems peace and rest and worship, the distance between is all unrest. Our eyes follow His eyes over the changing panorama. Now it is the helmeted, armored soldiers, indifferent to the sight above them, a picture of their setting, a common spectacle, an everyday event of no interest to them except to carry out orders, and for the perquisites of the garments. Now it is a group of blas-

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pheming priests, laughing a hideous laugh, sticking forth their tongues and wagging their heads in glee at the abundant success of their plans. Now it is a group of more tender-hearted beings moved by the sentiment of the occasion only, but not touched in the life. Here is a man impressed undoubtedly, and with every mark of interest, but is transparent enough to show his harbored sin which is more to him than the Sacrifice before him. Yonder is a group of cowards, called by the Master's own voice to be His disciples; they followed Him when all was fair, but their discipleship is not of the enduring quality, that can endure reproach, ridicule or discomfort. And here, nearer, is a group which irradiates more consolation; rebuff and insult have not forced them away, for their gaze is intent—to see the end! Dear ones! little flock! sinning at times, yet faithful—in spite of all. Sweet converse has there been ere this—the eye to eye as it is now, but then beneath the shady limbs of the fig-tree and not the limbs of the tree of shame. Do we hear aright the half-sob, “Mother!” when the central figure of the group totters feebly, in the self-forgetful anguish of seeing the best-beloved dying. His arms are stretched out, but are powerless to aid her. Yes, there in the clangor of noises,

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in the midst of the gloom, amid the curses and groans, surrounded by anger and malice and treachery, His arms are spread out wider than to enfold the Blessed Mother, and the faithful few; they are wide open for the poor sorrowing penitent, down there at the foot of the Cross; wide open for that great seething mass of humanity,—the world of man,—that whosoever will believe on Him and repent of his sins may be saved. Ah! “God so loved the world!” Yes, “*God so loved the world.*”

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